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FREDERIC THOMAS BLANCHARD
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MELPOMENE:

OR

The REGIONS of

TERROR and PITY.

AN

ODE.

LONDON: Printed in the YEAR 1757.

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MELPOMENE:

AN

ODE.

I.

QUEEN of the human heart! at whoſe command
The ſwelling tides of mighty Paſſion riſe;
MELPOMENE, ſupport my vent'rous hand,
And aid thy ſuppliant in his bold empriſe,
From the gay ſcenes of pride
Do thou his footſteps guide
To Nature's aweful courts, where nurſt of yore,
Young SHAKESPEAR, Fancy's child, was taught his various lore.

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II.

So may his favour'd eye explore the ſource,
To few reveal'd, whence human ſorrows charm:
So may his numbers, with pathetic force,
Bid *Terror* ſhake us, or *Compaſſion* warm,
As different ſtrains controul
The movements of the ſoul,
Adjuſt its paſſions, harmonize its tone,
To feel for others' woe, or nobly bear its own.

III.

Deep in the covert of a ſhadowy grove,
Mid broken rocks where daſhing currents play;
Dear to the penſive pleaſures, dear to love,
And *Damon*'s Muſe, that breathes her melting lay,
This ardent prayer was made.
When lo! the ſecret ſhade,
As conſcious of ſome heavenly preſence, ſhook---
Strength, firmneſs, reaſon, all---my' aſtoniſh'd ſoul forſook.

IV. Ah!

IV.

Ah! whither Goddeſs! whither am I borne?
To what wild region's necromantic ſhore?
Theſe pannicks whence? and why my boſom torne
With ſudden terrors never felt before?
Darkneſs inwraps me round,
While from the vaſt profound
Emerging ſpectres dreadful ſhapes aſſume,
And gleaming on my ſight, add horror to the gloom.

V.

Ha! what is he whoſe fierce indignant eye,
Denouncing vengeance, kindles into flame?
Whoſe boiſterous fury blows a ſtorm ſo high,
As with its thunder ſhakes his labouring frame.
What can ſuch rage provoke?
His words their paſſage choak:
His eager ſteps, nor time nor truce allow,
And dreadful dangers wait the menace of his brow.

VI.

Protect me, Goddeſs! whence that fearful ſhriek
Of conſternation? as grim Death had laid
His icy fingers on ſome guilty cheek,
And all the powers of manhood ſhrunk diſmay'd:
Ah ſee! beſmear'd with gore,
Revenge ſtands threatening o'er
A pale delinquent, whoſe retorted eyes
In vain for pity call---the wretched victim dies.

VII.

Nor long the ſpace---abandon'd to Deſpair,
With eyes aghaſt, or hopeleſs fixt on earth,
This ſlave of paſſion rends his ſcatter'd hair,
Beats his ſad breaſt, and execrates his birth:
While torn within, he feels
The pangs of whips and wheels;
And ſees, or fancies, all the fiends below,
Beckoning his frighted ſoul to realms of endleſs woe.---

VIII.

Before my wondering ſenſe new phantoms dance,
And ſtamp their horrid ſhapes upon my brain---
A wretch with jealous brow, and eyes aſkance,
Feeds all in ſecret on his boſom pain.
Fond love, fierce hate, aſſail;
Alternate they prevail:
While conſcious pride and ſhame with rage conſpire,
And urge the latent ſpark to flames of torturing fire.

IX.

The ſtorm proceeds---his changeful viſage trace:
From rage to Madneſs every feature breaks.
A growing phrenzy grins upon his face,
And in his frightful ſtare Diſtraction ſpeaks:
His ſtraw-inveſted head
Proclaims all reaſon fled;
And not a tear bedews thoſe vacant eyes---
But ſongs and ſhouts ſucceed, and laughter-mingled ſighs.

X. Yet,

X.

Yet, yet again!---a Murderer's hand appears
Graſping a pointed dagger ſtain'd with blood!
His look malignant chills with boding fears,
That check the current of life's ebbing flood.
In midnight's darkeſt clouds
The dreary miſcreant ſhrowds
His felon ſtep---as 'twere to darkneſs given
To dim the watchful eye of all-pervading Heaven.

XI.

And hark! ah Mercy! whence that hollow ſound!
Why with ſtrange horror ſtarts my briſtling hair?
Earth opens wide, and from unhallow'd ground
A pallid Ghoſt ſlow-riſing ſteals on air.
To where a mangled corſe
Expos'd without remorſe
Lies ſhroudleſs, unentomb'd, he points the way---
Points to the prowling wolf exultant o'er his prey.

XII. " Why

XII.

" Was it for this, he cries, with kindly ſhower
" Of daily gifts the traytor I careſs'd ?
" For this array'd him in the robe of power,
" And lodg'd my royal ſecrets in his breaſt ?
" O kindneſs ill repay'd !
" To bare the murdering blade
" Againſt my life !---may Heav'n his guilt explore,
" And to my ſuffering race their ſplendid rights reſtore."

XIII.

He ſaid, and ſtalk'd away.---Ah Goddeſs ! ceaſe,
Thus with terrific forms to rack my brain;
Theſe horrid phantoms ſhake the throne of peace,
And Reaſon calls her boaſted powers in vain,
Then change thy magic wand,
Thy dreadful troops diſband,
And gentler ſhapes, and ſofter ſcenes diſcloſe,
To melt the feeling heart, yet ſooth its tendereſt woes.

XIV.

The fervent prayer was heard.---With hideous ſound,
Her ebon gates of darkneſs open flew;
A dawning twilight chears the dread profound,
The train of terror vaniſhes from view.
More mild enchantments riſe;
New ſcenes ſalute my eyes,
Groves, fountains, bowers, and temples grace the plain,
And turtles cooe around, and nightingales complain.

XV.

And every myrtle bower and cypreſs grove,
And every ſolemn temple teems with life;
Here glows the ſcene with fond but hapleſs love,
There with the deeper woes of human ſtrife.
In groups around the lawn,
By freſh diſaſters drawn,
The ſad ſpectators ſeem transfix'd in woe,
And pitying ſighs are heard, and heart-felt ſorrows flow.

XVI.

Behold that beauteous maid! her languid head,
Bends like a drooping lily charg'd with rain;
With floods of tears ſhe bathes a Lover dead,
In brave aſſertion of her honour ſlain.
Her boſom heaves with ſighs,
To Heaven ſhe lifts her eyes,
With grief beyond the power of words oppreſt,
Sinks on the lifeleſs corſe, and dies upon his breaſt.

XVII.

How ſtrong the bands of Friendſhip? yet, alas!
Behind yon mouldering tower with ivy crown'd,
Of two, the foremoſt in her ſacred claſs,
One from his friend receives the fatal wound!
What could ſuch fury move!
What but ill-fated love!
The ſame fair object each fond heart enthralls,
And he, the favour'd youth, her hapleſs victim falls.

XVIII.

Can aught ſo deeply ſway the generous mind
To mutual truth, as female truſt in love?
Then what relief ſhall yon fair mourner find,
Scorn'd by the man who ſhould her plaints remove?
By fair, but falſe Pretence,
She loſt her innocence;
And that ſweet babe, the fruit of treacherous art,
Claſpt in her arms expires, and breaks the parent's heart.

XIX.

Ah! who to pomp or grandeur would aſpire?
Kings are not rais'd above misfortune's frown.
That form, ſo graceful even in mean attire,
Sway'd once a ſceptre, once ſuſtain'd a crown.
From Filial rage and ſtrife,
To ſcreen his cloſing life,
He quits his throne, a father's ſorrow feels,
And in the lap of Want his patient head conceals.

XX.

More yet remain'd---but lo! the PENSIVE QUEEN
Appears confeſt before my dazzled ſight;
Grace in her ſteps, and ſoftneſs in her mien,
The face of ſorrow mingled with delight.
Not ſuch her nobler frame,
When kindling into flame,
And bold in Virtue's cauſe, her zeal aſpires
To waken guilty pangs, or breathe heroic fires.

XXI.

Aw'd into ſilence, my rapt ſoul attends---
The POWER, with eyes complacent, ſaw my fear;
And, as with grace ineffable ſhe bends,
Theſe accents vibrate on my liſtening ear.
" Aſpiring ſon of art,
" Know, tho' thy feeling heart
" Glow with theſe wonders to thy fancy ſhewn,
" Still may the Delian God thy powerleſs toils diſown.

XXII. " A

XXII.

" A thouſand tender ſcenes of ſoft diſtreſs
" May ſwell thy breaſt with ſympathetic woes;
" A thouſand ſuch dread forms on fancy preſs,
" As from my dreary realms of darkneſs roſe,
" Whence SHAKESPEAR's chilling fears,
" And OTWAY's melting tears---
" That aweful gloom, this melancholy plain,
" The *types* of every *theme* that ſuits the TRAGIC STRAIN.

XXII.

" But doſt thou worſhip Nature night and morn,
" And all due honour to her precepts pay?
" Can'ſt thou the lure of Affectation ſcorn,
" Pleas'd in the ſimpler paths of Truth to ſtray?
" Haſt thou the Graces fair
" Invok'd with ardent prayer?
" They muſt attire, as Nature muſt impart,
" The ſentiment ſublime, the language of the heart.

XXIV. " Then,

XXIV.

" Then, if aſſenting Genius pour his ray,
" Warm with inſpiring influence on thy breaſt;
" Taſte, judgment, fancy, if thou can'ſt diſplay,
" And the deep ſource of Paſſion ſtand confeſt;
" Then may the liſtening train,
" Affected, feel thy ſtrain;
" Feel Grief or Terror, Rage or Pity move:
" Change with thy varying ſcenes, and every ſcene approve."

XXV.

Humbled before her ſight, and bending low,
I kiſs'd the borders of her crimſon veſt;
Eager to ſpeak, I felt my boſom glow,
But Fear upon my lips her ſeal impreſt.
While awe-ſtruck thus I ſtood,
The bowers, the lawn, the wood,
The FORM CELESTIAL, fading on my view,
Diſſolv'd in liquid air, and all the viſion flew.

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